

**REMARKS**

Claims 1, 2 and 5-8 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claim 1, 5 and 8 are amended. The amendments introduce no new matter, and serve to better clarify the subject matter recited in the claims. Reconsideration of the application based on the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

The Office Action, in paragraph 2, objects to claims 1, 5 and 8 for an informality. Claims 1, 5 and 8 are amended to correct a misspelling. Withdrawal of the objection to claims 1, 5 and 8 is respectfully requested.

The Office Action, in paragraph 5, states that claims 1, 2 and 8 are allowed. Applicants appreciate the allowance of these claims.

The Office Action, in paragraph 4, rejects claims 5-7 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,620,367 to Mitamura taken in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,853,526 to Laurent et al. (hereinafter "Laurent") and/or U.S. Patent No. 3,864,189 to Galleithner et al. (hereinafter "Galleithner") and U.S. Patents Nos. 1,612,565 to Brown or 4,861,253 to Mattson. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 5 recites, among other features, a preprocessing machine comprised of (i) joining means for mutually joining a pair of holders supporting both bead portions of a green tire, respectively, and (ii) preliminary inflating means for supplying a liquid into a bladder having opposite axial ends tightly attached to the holders, respectively, to preliminarily inflate the bladder and green tire into a toroidal shape, and a transfer device that transfers the preliminarily inflated bladder and green tire, together with the holders, from the preprocessing machine to the vulcanizer, and that transfers the vulcanized tire, together with the holders and the bladder, from the vulcanizer to a post-cure inflator.

The Office Action, in paragraph 5, states that claims 1, 2 and 8 are allowed over the prior art of record because (1) the prior art includes supports for the bead portions that are

separate and distinct elements from the clamping elements for the bladder; and (2) the prior art suggests removal of the tire from the bladder prior to postcure inflation. Claim 5 positively recites that the opposite axial ends of the bladder are tightly attached to the holders, and that the transfer device transfers the vulcanized tire, together with the holders and the bladder, from the vulcanizer to the postcure inflator. As such, independent claim 5 recites features which the Office Action admits distinguish the subject matter of claims 1 and 8 from the applied prior art. Additionally, dependent claims 6 and 7 incorporate all of the features recited in independent claim 5, and are therefore also distinguishable from the prior art for the reasons set forth in the Office Action with regard to the allowance of at least independent claims 1 and 8.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of claims 5-7 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over any combination of the applied references are respectfully requested.

For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 5-7, in addition to the allowed claims 1, 2 and 8, are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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